

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

In the Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method comprising ~~the steps of:~~ (1) sending an authorization inquiry from a first access router to a second access router including an identifier that identifies ~~the a~~ mobile terminal; (2) querying a database maintained by a home network associated with the mobile terminal to determine whether the mobile terminal is authorized to be handed off to the second access router by sending the authorization inquiry from the second access router to an administrative server associated with the second network, said querying comprising querying the database on the basis of a membership plan associated with a subscriber of the mobile terminal, and sending the authorization inquiry from the administrative server associated with the second network to a home server of the home network that accesses the database; (3) in response to determining that the mobile terminal is authorized to be handed off to the second access router, performing a handoff operation from the first access router to the second access router; and (4) in response to determining that the mobile terminal is not authorized to be handed off to the second access router, inhibiting the handoff operation from the first access router to the second access router.

2. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein performing a handoff operation ~~step (3)~~ comprises ~~the step of~~ transferring context information from the first access router to the second access router.

3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the method is steps (1) through (4) ~~are~~ performed without allocating any radio frequency resources of the second access router to communicate with the mobile terminal until after it is determined that the mobile terminal is authorized to be handed off to the second access router.

4. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein querying the database ~~step~~

(2)-comprises ~~the step of~~ querying the database on the basis of a list of access routers that are authorized to accept handoffs from the mobile terminal.

5. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein querying the database ~~step (2)-comprises the step of~~ querying the database to determine authorization based on a time of day.

6. (Cancelled)

7. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein querying the database ~~step (2)-comprises the step of~~ querying the database on the basis of dynamic loading conditions.

8. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising ~~the step of~~ modifying the database on the basis of dynamic loading conditions, such that authorization is dependent upon dynamic loading conditions.

9. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the method is steps (1) to (4) ~~are~~ conducted between access routers that use same access technology.

10. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the method is steps (1) to (4) ~~are~~ conducted between access routers that use heterogeneous access technologies.

11. (Cancelled)

12. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein querying the database ~~step (2)-is~~ performed using the DIAMETER protocol.

13. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein querying the database step (2) is performed using the Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) protocol.

14. (Currently Amended) An access router ~~that serves mobile terminals within a service area~~, comprising: a processor, and memory storing computer executable instructions that, when executed by the processor performs a method comprising the steps of:

(1) receiving by the access router, said access router serving mobile terminals within a service area, from another access router that serves a different service area a request for authorization information concerning a mobile terminal that is a candidate for a handoff operation;

(2) sending the authorization information to an administrative server associated with the second network for transmittal from the administrative server associated with the access router to a home server of the home network that accesses the database and ~~causing querying a database maintained by a home network associated with the mobile terminal to be queried to determine whether the access router is authorized to accept a handoff operation for the mobile terminal~~ on the basis of a membership plan associated with a subscriber of the mobile terminal;

(3) in response to determining that the mobile terminal is authorized to be handed off to the access router, performing a handoff operation with the another access router; and

(4) in response to determining that the mobile terminal is not authorized to be handed off to the access router, inhibiting the handoff operation with the another access router.

15. (Currently Amended) The access router of claim 14, wherein performing a handoff operation step (3) ~~comprises the step of~~ transferring context information from the another access router to the access router.

16. (Currently Amended) The access router of claim 14, wherein the method is steps (1) ~~through (4) are~~ performed without allocating any radio frequency resources of the access

router to communicate with the mobile terminal until after it is determined that the mobile terminal is authorized to be handed off to the access router.

17. (Currently Amended) The access router of claim 14, wherein sending the authorization information step (2) comprises ~~the step of~~ querying the database on the basis of a list of access routers that are authorized to accept handoffs of the mobile terminal.

18. (Currently Amended) The access router of claim 14, wherein sending the authorization information step (2) comprises ~~the step of~~ querying the database to determine authorization that is dependent on a time of day.

19. (Cancelled)

20. (Currently Amended) The access router of claim 14, wherein sending the authorization information step (2) comprises ~~the step of~~ querying the database on the basis of dynamic loading conditions.

21. (Currently Amended) The access router of claim 14, further comprising ~~the step of~~ providing information concerning current loading conditions to the database, such that authorization is dependent upon dynamic loading conditions.

22. (Original) The access router claim 14, wherein the access router serves mobile terminals using Internet Protocol.

23. (Original) The access router of claim 14, wherein the access router uses a different access technology than the another access router from which the candidate handoff is to be performed.

24. (Original) The access router of claim 23, wherein the access router uses wireless LAN technology, and wherein the another access router uses GPRS technology.

25. (Original) The access router of claim 14, wherein the access router uses the same access technology as the another access router from which the candidate handoff is to be performed.

26. (Cancelled)

27. (Currently Amended) The access router of claim 14, wherein sending the authorization information step (2) is performed using the DIAMETER protocol.

28. (Currently Amended) The access router of claim 14, wherein sending the authorization information step (2) is performed using the Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) protocol.

29. (Currently Amended) A method comprising ~~the steps of~~:

(1) prior to initiating a handoff operation of a mobile terminal from a first network served by a first access router to a second network served by a second access router, sending an authorization inquiry from the first access router to an administrative server associated with the first network;

(2) sending the authorization inquiry from the administrative server associated with the first network to a home server of a home network associated with the mobile terminal, the authorization inquiry including an identifier that identifies the mobile terminal;

(3) receiving a result of a database query from the home network, wherein the result of the database query indicates whether the mobile terminal is authorized to be handed off to the

second access router on the basis of a membership plan associated with a subscriber of the mobile terminal;

(4) in response to determining that the mobile terminal is authorized to be handed off to the second access router, performing a handoff operation from the first access router to the second access router; and

(5) in response to determining that the mobile terminal is not authorized to be handed off to the second access router, inhibiting the handoff operation from the first access device to the second access router.

30. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 29, wherein receiving the result of the database query from the home network step (3) comprises ~~the step of~~ receiving a result that depends on dynamic loading conditions associated with the second access router.

31. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 29, wherein receiving the result of the database query from the home network step (3) comprises ~~the step of~~ receiving a result corresponding to querying the database to determine authorization based on a time of day.

32. (Cancelled)

33. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 29, wherein receiving the result of the database query from the home network step (3) comprises ~~the step of~~ receiving a result corresponding to querying the database on the basis of dynamic loading conditions.

34. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 29, wherein the method is steps (1) to (4) ~~are~~ performed without allocating any radio frequency resources for communicating between the second access router and the mobile terminal until after it has been determined that the mobile terminal is authorized to be handed off to the second access router.

35. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the administrative server associated with the second network comprises an authentication, authorization and accounting (AAA) server.

36. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the administrative server associated with the second network comprises a Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) server.

37. (Previously presented) The method of claim 29, wherein the administrative server associated with the first network comprises an authentication, authorization and accounting (AAA) server.

38. (Previously presented) The method of claim 29, wherein the administrative server associated with the first network comprises a Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) server.